

October 28, 2015

Travel documents for studying in the United States

Last week the U.S. Embassy hosted the annual college fair for Jamaican secondary school students interested in higher education in the United States. There were also educational outreach activities at the American International School of Kingston and at Hillel Academy. These educational events sparked interest in student visas.

Q. *How do I obtain a student F-1 visa?*

Congratulations on your decision to study in the United States! We hope that many of you had the opportunity to attend our college fair last week.

Before applying for an F-1 student visa, you need to research which school is right for your career goals. You may have an advisor in the school you attend now, or you may wish to consult knowledgeable sources at the Marcus Garvey Information Center at the U.S. Embassy. You can correspond directly with any of the schools to gain more information – all of them have websites, and welcome inquiries. You may also go to the following website to learn about your study options: <http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/school-search/>

Every school has its entrance requirements, but in general you need to complete an application form, pay an application fee, write 1-3 essays, and submit 1-3 references. Some schools require you to take entrance exams. You should start the application process early, as acceptance takes a few months. Once you have been accepted to the school, then you prepare for the visa interview.

After you have been accepted into a school, you complete form I-901 and pay the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) enrollment fee. Your school will then provide you with a form called the I-20. This form must contain your individual SEVIS identification number and must be signed by you and the appropriate school representative. Follow this link to learn how to pay your SEVIS fee: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901>

Once you have paid your SEVIS fee and obtained your form I-20, then you are ready to apply for your F-1 student visa. Your F-1 student visa application starts by electronically filing form DS-160: <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>. If you have ever applied for a tourist visa in the past, this will be a familiar process. Be sure to print out and keep the DS-160 barcode page!

Once you have submitted your DS-160 application online, you will then be able to schedule your interview at the U.S. Embassy. Here is the website where you can schedule your interview: <https://ais.usvisa-info.com/en-jm/niv>

You need not be worried about your visa interview, but you do need to be prepared. Bring a valid passport along with your form I-20 and your SEVIS payment receipt. You also need to bring your DS-160 barcode page and your appointment confirmation sheet.

Most importantly, bring evidence of financial support for school to your interview. This can include scholarship letters, affidavits of support, bank statements or other supporting documentation.

As a reminder, each time you enter the United States, you will be interviewed briefly by the Customs and Border Patrol agent at the airport. He or she will authorize your admission to the United States after you have shared with him/her your travel plans. In addition to your valid passport and F-1 visa, make sure that you also present your form I-20 to the Customs and Border Patrol agent at the port of entry. You should also be prepared to show any documents to demonstrate that you are a legitimate student. These might include your letter of acceptance, scholarship letters, and evidence of financial support.

You can find more information about how to travel to the U.S. on our website, www.kingston.usembassy.gov and the website of our authorized service provider at www.usvisa-info.com. Keep on top of Embassy news on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/pages/US-Embassy-Jamaica and by following @USEmbassyJA on Twitter. We also answer general visa questions on our Facebook and Twitter pages

Remember your appointment time is your arrival time. You do not need to show up earlier than your appointment time.